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THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTIQUITIES IN THE EAST.

In a letter to the *Academy* (No. 930), dated Assouan, February 9, 1890, Professor Sayce calls attention to the destruction of antiquities in Egypt. About one or two years ago a society was formed to look after and protect these antiquities, and in order to raise funds and to limit the number of sightseers, a tax of 100 piastres was imposed on every person visiting the monuments of Upper Egypt. The object for which this society was organized has not been accomplished. Sayce claims that "more havoc has been wrought among them during the last three months than during the last half century. The famous tombs of Beni-Hasan have been hopelessly mutilated. The curious bas-reliefs of Tel el-Amarna have been hewn from the walls and the cartouches have been cut out of the tombs of the Sixth Dynasty at El-Bersheh. It is, however, in the well known "Tombs of the Colossus" and its immediate neighborhood that the hand of the destroyer has been most ruthless. The floor of the tomb is strewn with the fragments of the paintings and hieroglyphs with which its walls were once adorned. The hunting scene, carved in delicate relief on a stone at its entrance, and interesting on account of certain figures in it being drawn according to the modern rules of perspective, has been wantonly smashed to atoms. Even the tablet of Thothmes III. at the entrance of the quarries near the tombs has not been spared; it has been defaced beyond recognition. The work of destruction has been carried out in order to provide the dealers of Ekhmîm and Luxor with fragments of inscribed stone which they may sell to tourists." Sayce goes on to say that not only dealers but also the quarrymen are to blame for this destruction. The latter are now blasting at Assiout, Qars-el-Syâd, Gebel-el-Tûk, etc. "It is evident that whatever inscriptions there are above ground in Egypt must be copied at once if they are to be copied at all." In the *Academy*, No 927, Lieut.-Col. Ross has a note on "The Mutilation of Monuments in Egypt," which corresponds very well to what Professor Sayce says.

The monuments and inscriptions in Assyria, Babylonia, and the Hittite country are sharing the same fate. At Carchemish (Jerâbis), the Arabs, because of their fanatical dislike to anything resembling an idol, have recently broken into fragments the large statue of black basalt with a female figure. Only four years ago Mr. Haynes saw this figure in perfect condition and photographed it, but in October, 1888, there was little or nothing of it left. Three other large statues at the same place have been broken in two and are now being used by the Arabs as millstones. In Babylonia the Arab dealers are digging at Jumjuma,

Birs-Nimrud, Tel-Ibrahim, Abû-Habba, etc. It was only a short time ago that they found at Jumjuma what Henri Pognon has described in the *Journal asiatique*, as Nebuchadrezzar's library. The Turkish authorities seized these finds, threw them into sacks, handling them as one would handle potatoes or corn, and they are now lying in a heap in the cellar of the Serai at Hilleh. There are many dealers in Baghdâd who own large collections of antiquities, excavated secretly by the Arab diggers. These collections are being scattered all over the world in small lots and in nine cases out of ten their owners do not know from what site they have been obtained.

At the present time, little is being done in the way of scientific excavation, and the prospect for the future is poor. The Turkish government, in the person of the director of the Stamboul Museum, has recently caught the scientific fever, and, as a result, a law has been passed that all the antiquities in the empire are the property of the sultan. Firmans to excavate are granted only on the condition, that the excavators be accompanied by a Turkish commissioner, whose salary they must pay, and to whom they must hand over all the antiquities found. Again the jealousy of the ambassadors of the principal powers at Constantinople has frustrated many attempts to obtain special and favorable firmans from the sultan. On account of the greed of the Turks and the jealousy of the powers, there is little encouragement to attempt further work in excavating these Assyrian, Babylonian and Hittite sites. Ambar and Abû-Habba have recently become the private property of the sultan, and hence firmans to excavate at these sites cannot be obtained on any conditions. The Arabs, however, will continue to excavate secretly and to break, destroy and promiscuously scatter their finds. Unless these mounds can be excavated scientifically and by persons anxious to preserve every relic found, it would be much better to have them remain untouched.

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